



Evaluation Data Report

The Society for Mathematical Biology Annual Meeting and Conference

July 25-28, 2012

Pamela Bishop, Program Evaluation Coordinator
Ana Richters, Program Evaluation Assistant
National Institute for Mathematical and Biological Synthesis
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The Society for Mathematical Biology 2012 Annual Meeting and Conference

Evaluation Data Report

Background

Introduction

This report contains evaluation data for The Society for Mathematical Biology Annual Meeting and Conference (SMB Conference), which took place July 25-28, 2012, in Knoxville, TN. The conference theme was Mathematics and Biology: Interdisciplinary Connections and Living Systems. The gathering was hosted by the National Institute for Mathematical and Biological Synthesis (NIMBioS) and the University of Tennessee. The conference was held at the Knoxville Convention Center and associated activities were held at NIMBioS before and after the conference.

A total of 430 participants attended the 2012 SMB Conference. Plenary speakers were Dr. Alexander Anderson (Integrated Mathematical Oncology Dept., H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Inst., Tampa, FL), Dr. Troy Day (Depts. of Mathematics & Biology, Queen's Univ., Ontario, Canada), Dr. Michio Kondoh (Dept. of Environmental Solution Technology, Ryukoku Univ.), Dr. Lauren Ancel Meyers (Section of Integrative Biology, Univ. of Texas, Austin), Dr. Michael L. Simpson (Materials Science & Engineering, Univ. of Tennessee, Knoxville), and Dr. Claire J. Tomlin (Dept. of Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences, Univ. of California, Berkeley).

Evaluation Design

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation of the conference was both formative and summative in nature, in that the data collected from respondents was intended to both gain feedback from respondents about the quality of the current conference and also to inform future similar meetings. Several questions constituted the foundation for the evaluation:

1. Were participants satisfied with the conference overall?
2. Did the conference meet participant expectations?
3. Do participants feel they gained a better understanding of research happening in disciplines other than their own?
4. What impact do participants feel the conference will have on their future research?
5. What changes in accommodations, format, and/or content would participants like to see at future similar meetings?

Evaluation Procedures

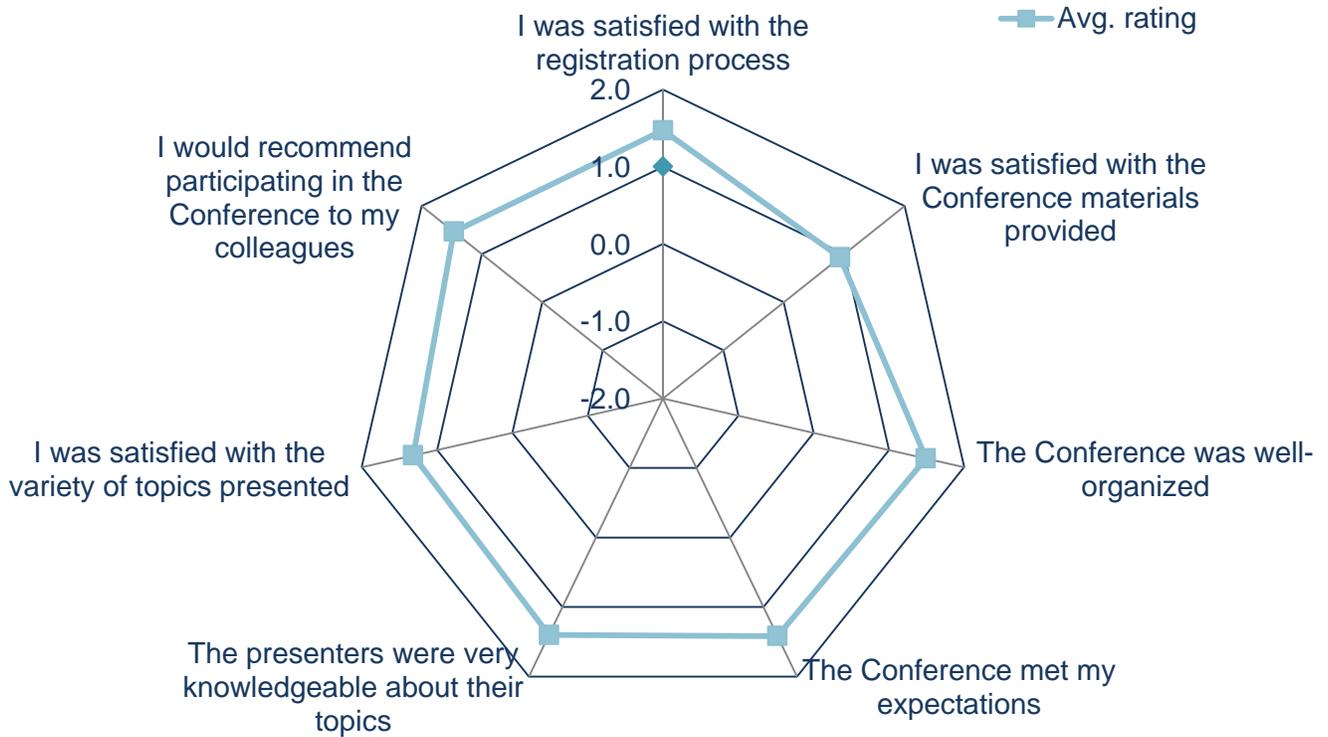
An electronic survey aligned to the evaluation questions was designed by the NIMBioS Evaluation Coordinator with input from the NIMBioS Director and the SMB President. The final instrument was hosted online via the University of Tennessee's online survey host mrlInterview. Links to the survey were sent via email to 374 registered conference participants on July 31, 2012. Sixteen NIMBioS leadership and faculty members, as well as SMB president Gerda de Vries, were excluded from the evaluation. An additional 39 registrants who did not provide an email address were also excluded from the evaluation. Nine emails were rejected as "undeliverable," for a total of 365 valid evaluation recipients.

Reminder emails were sent to non-responding participants on August 14 and 21, 2012. By August 28, 2012, 270 of the 365 valid recipients had given their feedback, for a response rate of 74%.

Evaluation Findings

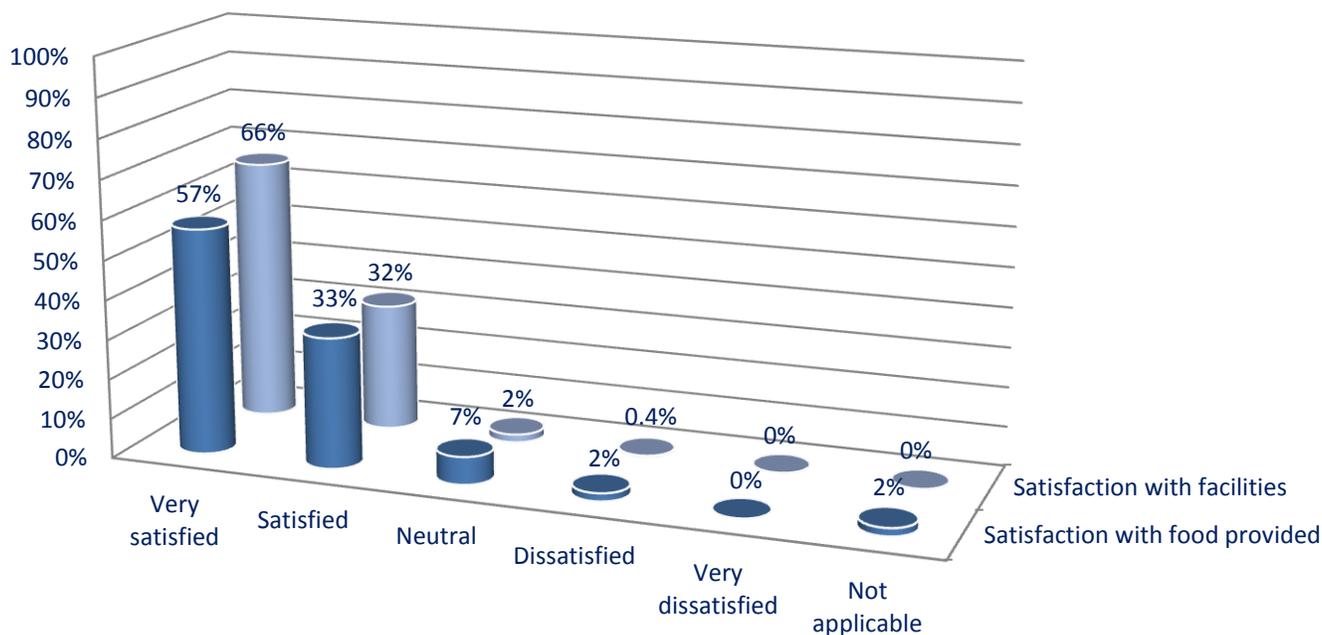
Overall Satisfaction

Figure 1. Satisfaction with various aspects of the conference (n = 270)



Scored on a 5-point Likert scale from -2 to 2 for “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”

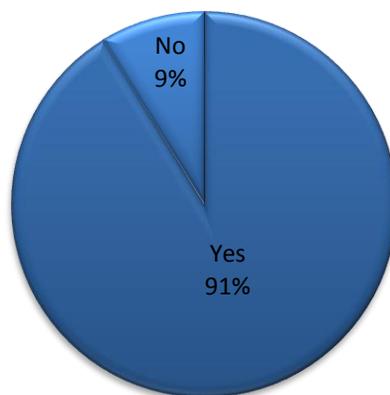
Figure 2. Satisfaction with accommodations (n = 265 food, 261 facilities)



Conference Content and Format

Participant Learning

Figure 3. As a result of attending this conference, I feel I have a better understanding of research occurring in other disciplines besides my own: (n = 264)



Comments:

A little. I continued connections with several people I had met at the preceding NIMBioS conference on Dengue modelling, which was the most useful benefit of attending.

A star to indicate accessibility for non-specialists or undergrads would be helpful.

Although I wish there was three of me.

Although, it was not always clear whether the presenters are working at the cutting edge of research on their disciplines.

Always good to see new ideas.

But that's not one of my expectations.

Cancer research is one of the greatest enterprises in biomedical research. I hope the conference will do more to invite and encourage the participation of clinical oncologists and cancer biologists for the truly and effective integration of scientists from multiple disciplines.

Everything is perfect, except I think that there're too many mini-symposium/talks going on at the same time. I understand this is a big conference, but there are several topics I was quite interested in but since they were scheduled at the same time I had to miss some of them.

Great conference, I like the communal lunch. One suggestion - no more playing music for the last 2 minutes of the 20-minute session talks (it distracts from the discussion).

Great conference.

Great talks enjoyed meeting everyone and strengthening relationships with those I met at least years meeting. A great time for a grad student, extremely informative.

I am a graduate student, and it would have been nice to have a list of folks and the institutions from which they were coming. Looking at folks' nametags was a little tedious, and I don't know the field very well, so it would be nice to put the associated institution with the presenter's names. Also, there were some folks who attended, but did not present, and it would be nice to have a list of all the folks who would be attending. Overall, it was a great meeting, even though I'd never attended before, and I'd never been to a math/bio conference. Thanks!

I feel like greater participation by biologists would really have helped the meeting. I realize this is an event where many folks go to see their community, but I am concerned that some of the biological realism was missing in a number of sessions. There were, of course, some very nice talks and very engaging participants. However, perhaps bringing in biologists associated with mini-symposia would help to increase the excitement about the modeling being done by participants.

I find this conference to be very interesting one; I have attended it the first time.

I found it particularly stimulating to attend sessions that had a relatively loose relation to my own research. This gave me the opportunity to look beyond my day-to-day work and think about applications in other areas.

I hadn't really looked at much of the evolution and ecology stuff before, so I enjoyed finding out about some new work in those fields.

I have interests in cell biology and cancer, and found that sessions on those topics tended to be scheduled at the same time, so I didn't get to see as many talks on these two different topics as I would have liked.

I hope that in future, more attention is given to researchers in mathematical molecular biology.

I particularly enjoyed one the education sessions I attended. It gave me lots of ideas for my own teaching.

I was a nice venue to exchange ideas.

I was exposed to a variety of presentations and different research areas. This helped broaden my knowledge on ongoing research in my area of research and different methodologies in carrying out research.

I was very impressed with the conference, its organization and the presenters. I will attend again.

It allowed me to make connections with colleagues about current research and to learn about advances in other areas, especially education of mathematical biology.

It was a great time, thank you very much!

It was disappointing that attendance of the poster sessions was not a bit higher, but given that they were centrally located and food was provided, I'm not sure how much it could be improved.

It would be much easier to navigate the conference talks if the abstracts were available in either printed or electronic form. Also, the participant list with the participants email addresses would be useful addition to the conference.

It would be smart and even more effective, if the mini symposiums are grouped differently, for example I wanted to attend parallel session both related to bio mechanics but could go only to one.

Many of the presentations were of poor quality. In particular, many of the talks needed to be clearer about what biological problem they were trying to answer. There were also lots of talks that were essentially one model with a different bell or whistle added to it. Conclusions were made, but the models were not well linked with problems or questions arising in biological systems.

Nice size made "dipping in" easy.

Presentations were helpful to my own research interests and enlightening.

Really excellent organization! This was by far the best conference I have been to in a long time.

Sessions which I found good introductions to areas I did not previously know were 'wound healing' and 'cancer immunology'

Some of the talks that I attended were not well rehearsed. The presenters of those talks did not know where to invest more time and energy. Will it be possible that in future there should be some guidelines (the way we have for the chairing of a session) towards this effect.

That's my own fault though - going to more sessions outside my own area would help!

The airport transport was greatly appreciated! A printed participant list would be helpful. A list of nearby recommended coffee shops, etc. would be helpful to ensure more "random mixing" of participants at night. The first day's lunch was lackluster. This I think encouraged many participants to eat off-site for subsequent lunches, which reduces networking at the lunches. Forums and panels should be in separate rooms, rather than during lunch. We want to talk, collaborate, and network during lunch. Not shout over a speaker about getting a postdoc position. (interested participants could carry their plates to the next-door room) If possible, would be helpful to leave all posters up all nights, and then indicate which night a presenter will be on hand to present and answer questions. An earlier announcement that there was a job board (in advance of SMB) would have been helpful: I would have posted a position or two.

The focus in most presentations was on the specific application rather than the mathematical methods behind them. This makes difficult to understand

The last year SMB conference in Krakow was better, both scientifically and socially (food, excursions etc.).

The plenary talks were especially helpful. It was difficult to go to many talks outside of my discipline because there were so many talks scheduled at the same time.

The topics and talks of this conference were theoretical rather than mathematical. I hope mathematical aspects to be strengthened. I really appreciate the effort and support of the organizing committee.

There was a nice balanced in the topic chosen.

There was a variety of research topics presented. It was great listening to what other mathematical biologists are working on.

There were many talks in my field. Since the sessions were in parallel, it was hard to attend talks in fields other than my own without "missing out" on my colleagues' talks.

These were mostly presentations at a very high level. Even so I walked away with a great exposure!

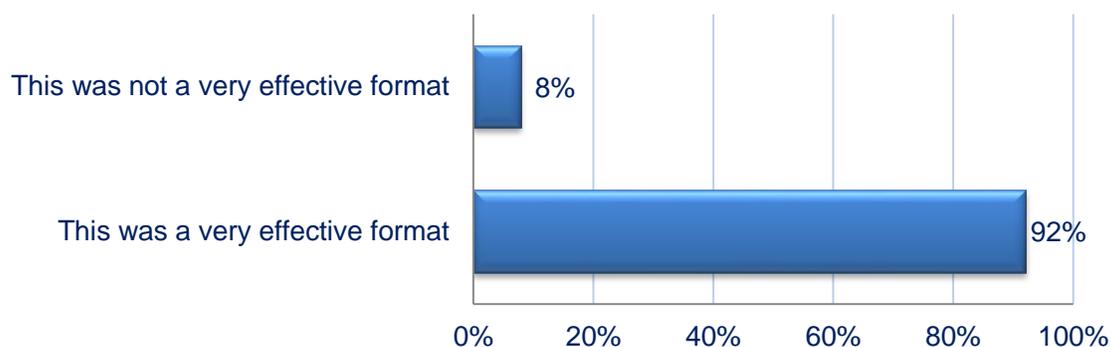
This is easy, the variety of methods is fairly small at this conference and I'm not working with dynamical systems. So I could learn a lot. The application variety was really interesting. But from a math conference I would have expected more methodological and less applied diversity.

Though I was hoping for a little bit more focus on the methodology rather than the findings of modeling exercises

Yes. Aside from the talks, I met a lot of interesting people and learned a great deal from the plenaries.

Conference Format

Figure 4. Effectiveness of conference format (n = 267)



Format could be improved if:

Most frequently mentioned: fewer parallel sessions, longer breaks.

Responses:

Talks are peer reviewed short papers. - Shorter sessions with fewer talks, but guaranteed quality.

More supplementary material for Knoxville itself and residence housing were provided. For example, bed sheets or at least informing the guests on what is provided on the rooms. I think more staff members are needed to answer emails since my emails were rarely or never responded to.

Timed the sessions differently with regard to breaks.

The participants were presented information about the presenter affiliation and a brief abstract about their topic.

There was a long gap between breakfast and lunch with no way to get snacks. It was really quite hard to focus starting around 11:30 or so.

The breaks between sessions and after plenary talks and the lunch break would have been a bit longer. There was just enough time to breath, but i would have liked to talk to a few more people during breaks.

It would have ended at 5 or 6pm the last day. Having a half day of talks the last day makes them very poorly attended (especially the later ones).

The number of parallel sessions was not so high.

Fewer parallel sessions -- parallel sessions reduce chances of going to interesting talks.

If the topics are more focused.

More time to talk with participants and networking. Very little free time. If you want to talk with someone you need to skip a talk.

For the most part it was effective. The session where the panelist on jobs spoke during lunch was the most ineffective.

I would suggest fewer, but longer talks, so there is time for a more thorough discussion.

Mathematical molecular biology is an emerging field that is closely tied to molecular biology. There are many mathematicians who are working in this area nowadays. Unfortunately, mathematical molecular biology is an underrepresented topic in the conference.

Too many talks at the same time.

Larger poster session, with fewer talks. I found many of the talks I attended to be rather modest in their advances and was disappointed in both the audience interest and the talk quality. I realize that the benefits of having many talks are that many people speak. Perhaps a few more invited sessions, somewhere between mini-symposia and plenaries would help. Or even mini-symposia where each talk lasted longer and was followed by a panel discussion.

Parallel session did not overlap in interest / topics.

Too intensive and sometimes tiring.

More symposiums in afternoons.

Most Useful Aspects of Conference

Most frequently mentioned: plenary talks, poster session, variety/breadth of topics presented, and networking opportunities/exchange of ideas.

Responses:

A very friendly, comfortable conference with excellent participants. Best food and organization of any conference I have attended. LOVED the late lunch -- smart idea -- and the providing of lunch.

Acquisition of current knowledge of various research fields.

Actually, I was fascinated by the plenary talks. It's clear in math bio that there are a thousand strands of this kind of thing. More so that it's easy to be a mathematician who gets interested in some bio problems and even does quite a bit of work with them without really having any way to know who the "big names" are in math bio generally, or what the "big questions" are. In my experience, you end up with kind of a "mole's eye view" of the particular bio problem that your particular biologists brought you in to talk about. So it's really nice to have somebody with a larger perspective pick some interesting and thoughtful people to give substantive hour talks.

As a junior researcher I enjoyed most the contributed talks because they were easy for me to follow compared to plenary talks which were more abstract.

As my first big conference presentation, it's a good experience.

Attending a random talk on a topic that i knew next to nothing about and learned a technique that I will try to apply to my work.

Being able to interact with math biologists who work in diverse areas.

Being able to meet so many researchers who work on different topics. I think that the receptions during the poster session were probably the most helpful for this.

Bringing together a relatively small community in a single location.

Brings together bio-mathematicians, biology folks working in diverse area of math biology under one forum. I get to see work outside my core area presented.

Career advice.

Coming together with all type of researchers with different interests...

Contacts I made with people I did not previously know.

Contacts with people I didn't know previously.

Cordial environment, like-minded researchers attending this conference.

Definitely interaction between the participants - if you put 200 scientists in a room for 3 days, they will eventually start talking about science (after discussing food and drinking) and I feel that that communication is the most useful aspect of the Conference.

Discussion sessions.

Diverse topics of talks.

Diversity and quality of talks.

Diversity, interests in applying mathematics into life sciences, biology.

Education Committee meeting.

Exchanged ideas with people who working on the similar research topics.

Exploring and exchanging ideas and Possible collaboration

Exposure to current work on different areas, getting to meet other researches and exchanging ideas and/or initiate collaboration.

Facilitation of understanding of clinical issues by mathematicians.

Feedback from the poster session.

For me, it was the possibility of seeing in person many young researchers from the U.S.

Getting in contact and discussing with other people working in the field of mathematical biology.

Getting outside my bubble. Honestly, I think it was incredibly useful in talks where we all stopped and explained the nitty gritty of our models. Usually, at conferences (bio related ones); no one wants to hear about every term in an ODE much less even see an ODE. Here, with this audience, it was very nice when people took the time to explain their models and the math which I found to be very interesting.

Getting to meet and know people in closely related fields of research, but people that I don't necessarily see at smaller more field specific conferences.

Getting together with other scientists is always useful. The wireless internet connection was very good.

Having a good time with people working in similar application domains.

Having food provided allowed for much more time spent on talks and for casual discussions.

Having meals provided allowed time to interact with other people which would have been impossible otherwise.

Having the opportunity of meeting so many people doing similar things and discussing their work

Having the opportunity to hear from and talk to other people doing research as the same field as me.

Having the teas and lunches provided really helped people mingle/network. When one has to find a place to go out to eat, I find people often form groups with individuals they already know.

Having time to discuss presented research in between talks & at poster session.

How many lectures were available and how well-organized it was.

I appreciated the combination of plenaries and more traditional talks.

I benefited from the Education group the most, but I learned about a couple important research papers in my area and areas close to mine that will help.

I enjoyed being at a smaller conference, where it was possible to catch up with people after their talks for further discussion. The meals provided another time to meet other researchers working in a variety of topics.

I enjoyed meeting many new researchers, both in my area as well as outside. I also greatly appreciated the presentation on finding a tenure track job. It was very informative and helpful.

I feel the most useful aspect was I could know and hear many important leading researchers in Cancer Modeling. This let me to know the frontiers in their research.

I get to see how math biology modeling distinguishes itself from physical approach and how they could benefit from each other.

I got a great range of information from the talks, including topics that I knew well and topics that were new to me.

I got tips and resources for a research question I've been stuck on for a year.

I liked the short breaks, and the communal lunch/suppers, it encouraged folks to talk and get to know one another. I also liked the contra dancing.

I think that having breakfast and lunch at the Conference was very useful for networking.

I was able to present my research and gain valuable experience presenting to an academic audience.

I, as a biologist, found the sessions about education the most helpful. Brainstorming new ideas on how to get the math across to biologists was really useful to me.

In terms of usefulness, I found the content of the talks, with the subsequent access to materials that I can reference from those talks to be most useful.

Informal interactions with a lot of people from the field. In my case I am looking for a postdoc position and could speak with people that were previously postdocs in a couple of places I am considering.

Interactions with other researchers.

Interactions with colleagues new and old. Chance to hear and interact with areas outside my field of expertise.

Interdisciplinary nature of the conference.

It was a good venue for students, both to present their work and to hear about work of others.

It was useful to be exposed to different areas of research, and get an idea of the techniques other people use to solve problems, as well as the challenges faced in Mathematical Biology research.

It's an opportunity to get an idea of the current status of research in a more efficient way of simply reading journal articles. Conferences give me a broader perspective and I try and attend some sessions outside of my research interests.

Just being able to meet with people in person, and to be able to ask questions live.

Keeping to the time schedule so one could switch between talks.

Kept at a number of participants that easily allows for meeting the speakers and discuss

Knowledge dissemination.

Learning about what others are working on.

Learning what other people are working on in Math Biology.

Listening to talks, and coffee-break interactions with folks.

Lunch provided and everything on time.

Making contacts.

Many, including lunch-time.

Math-bio education sessions

Meeting people.

Meeting researchers with common interests.

Meeting colleagues. Often the experts we seek are not at our home institutions.

Meeting friends and learning the latest in the fields that interest me.

Meeting new people.

Meeting other researchers and learn of other interesting lines of investigation.

Meeting other researchers in a variety of fields and getting more concrete ideas about the wide range of topics in mathematical biology.

Meeting other researchers who are also working in the field.

Meeting other researches.

Meeting people.

Meeting people.

Meeting so many researchers in both my area and other areas of study, exchanging interesting ideas and developing possible future collaborations.

Meeting with other researchers from around the world with similar interests. Face to face meetings like this are invaluable.

Mini symposiums followed by break time to discuss talks.

Mixing with the diverse audience.

Modeling ideas,

Networking and excellent sessions.

Networking and exchanging ideas.

Networking opportunities.

Networking opportunities.

Networking opportunities.

Networking opportunities.

Networking with other mathematical biologists.

Networking with postdoctoral scientists about current research directions and funding opportunities.

Networking!

Networking, good quality of attendees

Networking. Although the contra dancing was also fun :-)

Networking. As an undergraduate being able to connect to a variety of individuals in the field math biology was very beneficial. It provided an opportunity for me to connect with others as well as hear about what others are researching, to give me a better understanding of what I may be able to study in the future.

Opportunities to meet people.

Opportunity to present my research and get feedback. Also hear of other topics and develop potential projects and lists of contacts

opportunity to see some established scientists present their research

Personally being from the French research system for me the most useful aspect of the conference was the fact to discover the American system of research and meet other researchers.

Plenary talks and job search advise

Plenary talks.

Plenary talks at the beginning and middle of each day, during which no other session go.

Plenary talks were impressive and helpful. Sufficient time for communication in poster session.

Plenary talks. Undergraduate Student Poster Session.

Presentation of varieties of research works

Presentations and meeting with people.

Presentations.

Presenters are very knowledgeable. I learnt a lot.

Research Talks during the conference were very informative and the length of time in between coffee breaks was optimal for attention to the speakers.

Seeing and hearing what people are up to in mathematical biology.

Session talks.

Small size.

SMB tends to be a rather diverse crowd with substantial representation from another of application areas within mathematical biology represented. I think this cross-pollination is very useful.

Social interactions.

Talking during breaks, after hearing various talks.

Talking with colleagues.

Talking with other researchers.

Talking with others. The lunch structure was good for getting to meet new people.

Talks.

Talks.

That there were several sessions on related models of cell polarity. I thought the cell-biology stuff was quite good.

The abundant time to talk with other participants.

The breadth of the presentation topics.

The chance to network.

The community matches what I do. The size of the meeting is just right.

The conference meals allowed time to have discussion with colleagues. I found this extremely valuable. It's much easier to sit at someone's table than to arrange to meet them for lunch.

The conference was an outstanding way to find out about other people's work.

The diversified array of topics covered The well-researched and well done presentations that furthered my knowledge of modeling especially

The diversity of sections on infectious diseases.

The diversity of topics and approaches.

The fairly broad range of topics spoken on.

The focus on "mathematical biology" lead to a good mixture of participants ranging from mathematics to biophysics. This diversity distinguishes this meeting from the usual ones where the focus is either on mathematics or on biology.

The minisymposia/contributed talks paired with breaks so that people can have time to talk about what was presented.

The minisymposia were the most useful.

The plenary talks.

The poster session. The plenary by Troy Day - exactly what a plenary should be thought provoking and not just a highlight of someone's greatest hits.

The poster sessions.

The presentations and poster sessions were the most useful aspects of the Conference.

The quite big and central area where coffee was served was very useful for interacting with other people. This was not the case in the previous 2 years (Brazil, Poland) and I think it makes a huge difference! I recommend that for future conferences you try to make sure this feature is available in the venue chosen by the corresponding local organizers.

The rooms were conveniently located, and were the right size for the most part for the sessions.

The scheduling.

The talks were great. Good job of keeping them mostly on time: helped in jumping from section to section.

The talks.

The topics are focused enough to find many other participants with similar research interests. On the other hand, the conference also provided sufficient diversity to see other related works beyond my research.

The variety of the topics. I am also encouraged by the participation of a large number of graduate students and junior researchers.

The variety of topics covered in plenary and conference talks and the number of concurrent sessions, which allowed for a good number of talks on each topic.

The various categories so I had a choice.

The various sessions.

The various sessions where people presented their work.

The wide-ranging research topics talked about.

There was a good balance between having many talks and having sufficient breaks in which informal discussions could take place.

Time to network.

To find specific session in my research field.

To make new connection or relationships (since I am not in US).

To meet people that is working on different applications.

Undergrad opportunities.

Undergraduate experience of present poster. Schedule of different talks during the day and organizing them by room by topic.

Variety of ideas!

Variety of interesting topics.

Variety of speakers from all over the globe

Variety of topics and being able to choose the talks. Keeping them on a strict schedule allowed going from room to room effectively.

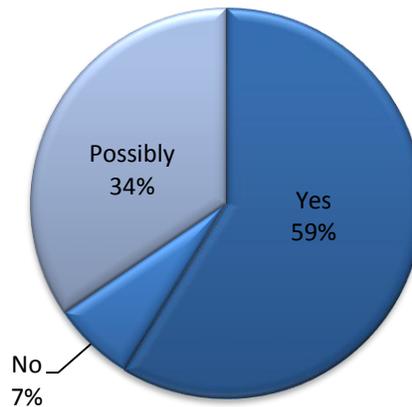
Variety of topics in breakout sessions (MS and CS)

Variety of topics.

Advice for job hunting.

Impact on Future Research Plans

Figure 5. Do you feel that the exchange of ideas that took place during the conference will influence your future research? (n = 264)



Comments:

At least one paper should come out of the work discussed at the conference.

Became aware of some tools I can use in my work.

Better aware of cutting-edge work by colleagues.

Good feedback from poster session.

Good ideas obtained from talks outside my area of expertise.

I am currently considering an extension of a proof I worked on, within a finite time horizon to an infinite time horizon, thanks to the exchange of ideas at the conference.

I am still learning about the many facets of the math-bio interface, and it is always inspiring to learn about how common tools are being used to solve different problems

I find conferences always give me ideas of things to think about or new directions for my own research and I certainly hope to implement some of the ideas from the education session I attended.

I hope to gain more from the collaborations compared to what I achieved at the time of the conference.

I learned a lot about the science and a lot about the practice of science in this field.

I really saw a lot of new stuff, and it encouraged me to go back to the textbooks and read and re-read things that I missed or never even heard about.

I will likely collaborate with someone I met at the conference who has data that will shape one of my research projects.

It possibly did, but not in a sense of any specific idea - just broadening my overall knowledge of mathematical biology.

It showed me the importance of the work that I am doing on bees but also made me think more cogently about our cancer research.

Made plans to work with a professor at other institution.

Mostly I feel that I learned a lot about the process of researching.

Only slightly; I am an ecologist and much of the conference focused on questions at sub-organismal scales

Research is always influenced by new ideas you hear, and by better knowing others' work.

Some interesting topics and papers to check out.

That's true. I learn many new things there.

The education connections will prove invaluable. I have a couple of possible leads for research projects, which were enhanced by the conference, especially one who has a Biology lab.

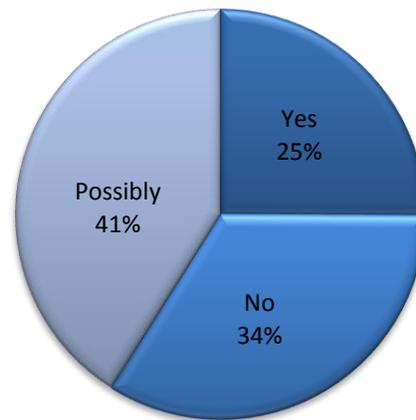
Various topics were brought to my attention that I didn't know about, and which I might now pursue further.

We set up time to exchange some much needed data for the honeybee problem I am working on.

Yes, certainly. Some of the feedback to my talk from the bio people will definitely influence where I go with the project. Second, some of the other sessions got me thinking some bio problems (modelling the cytoskeleton, for instance) that I didn't even know existed.

Impact on Future Collaborations

Figure 6. Did you develop plans for collaborative research with other conference participants with whom you had not previously collaborated? (n = 263)



Comments:

A colleague was interested in my research topics. We shared our experience and a possible collaboration is under discussion.

After my talk, several of the participants asked for further information and we have promised to keep in touch with each other.

At least 3 separate projects - maybe 4

Based on some suggestions at my talk, I anticipate collaborating with one or two new people on my current project.

But mainly through the dengue modelling conference rather than through the SMB meeting per se. It helped to see further presentations and have further conversations with fellow dengue modelling conference participants.

Going to visit another group at UAB and MSU to discuss possible projects. It's not clear yet whether anything will come of this.

Had some one-on-one meetings with people who I wanted to work with.

I didn't develop concrete plans with any other researchers, but as an undergraduate I was looking for ideas of potential projects I would maybe like to work on as a graduate student and found some potential.

I didn't start any collaboration, but I tightened connections with potential collaborators, and we got a better understanding of each other's research, and I imagine this will lead to active collaboration in the coming months.

I discussed about a few new topics, but have no definitely plans

I discussed several potential projects with people that stemmed from talks given, or discussions after the talks.

I don't know now. We will see what comes out of it.

I expect to collaborate with one biologist for his project though I am happy that my presentation sparks his research.

I got to meet with a few of the scientists who I had known (until the meeting) by reading their work. Yes, in that sense the meeting may prove very useful.

I have a few names in my mind to collaborate.

I have exchanged a couple of emails with one of the participants in response to my talk; this could lead to further interaction.

I initiated two new collaborations at this year's meeting. Happy about that.

I made connections for post-doc opportunities from a number of participants I met and I intend to follow them up.

I made many contacts at this conference, and had interest from a few to collaborate.

I met a bunch of young, bright researchers in my area, and I will stay in contact with them after the conference.

I met several people that I had not met before at this conference who have interests similar to my own. One of these will likely be coming to my home university to give a talk and discuss possibilities for future collaboration.

I met some interesting scientists in this meeting and I find it to be very important for my research.

I really enjoyed all the meals being provided. It made it very easy for everyone to stick around and mingle/network. I formed one collaboration during these tea & lunch meetings and the possibility for several others.

I talked to someone about the numerics I am doing, and we agreed to keep in touch for possibly improving my simulations.

I talked with Hermann Eberl and Nick Britton about perhaps running a workshop on bee health.

I talked with one person for future collaboration opportunities.

I was able to meet and talk to people who I would not have been able otherwise.

I was looking for doctoral programs, and I was able to talk to a few folks, and get a better idea of what was offered and what kind of people were in the field. Also, I got a better idea of the breadth of the field, and the types of tools used, models used, collaborations that are done, etc.

I'm a grad student and can't take up new projects right now.

Julie Mitchell, Chun Liu and I are lucky to be funded by NSF Focus Research Group (FRG) grant (which appears to be a first FRG in mathematical biology over many years) that allows us to collaborate on variational multiscale models for biomolecular structure, function and dynamics. In this meeting, I met Oscar Gonzaloze. Oscar and I will work on DNA structure analysis.

Made contacts with others who have developed potentially useful software tools

Math bio ed well represented.

Met a mathematician who has modeled disease systems related to the one I study. He and I will pursue a potential collaboration in the coming months.

Met but not collaborated with fellow MS speakers. Plans to push this forward now on a more concrete basis. Met many researchers for the first time - looking forward to making stronger connections with these in the future.

met people working on similar topics & plan to keep in touch with them

Met with old friends, exchanged and discussed new research areas, and made plans for more discussions

Missed a talk (scheduled at same time as mine) but very interested in an abstract. Met with the speaker over coffee and sketched out plans for a potentially fruitful and long-term collaboration. Completely unexpected, and very happy! Having printed conference materials (abstracts and participant lists) would have helped further encourage this session. By the way, why did the conference not better leverage NIMBioS? We didn't learn anything about it, have organized visits to tour, etc.

Networked for collaborative teaching.

No one close enough to my specific research.

Not yet, but I got great ideas for projects.

Plans are at the preliminary level with other graduate students and faculty. We plan on visiting\inviting some faculty members who work in our area of research.

Some future communication will take place with people that I met at the conference, but no specific collaborative research efforts are planned.

Someone that attended my talk is very interested in the subject, and is considering using a stochastic model for the disease. I would like to continue communication, as I have used a deterministic model thus far, and am just beginning to look at a stochastic model as well.

Talked with on individual about a similar problem we found when analyzing two different data sets. We have plans work on the problem together in the future.

That's the best part of SMB, the networking.

The collaboration is contingent upon a number of factors

The conference provided a good platform for discussions, which could lead to forming new collaborations.

The SMB Education group gave me many possible links, and it appears that the group may become more cohesive and organized from the dedication to education by the organizers.

There were other talks on subjects related to my interest by people I had not yet met. And now we will work together.

Two possible collaborations: one with mosquito researchers and one modeling animal behavior

we spread the special issue of a journal, meet our competitors, who now become collaborators

We will possibly join forces with an overseas math department to tackle a problem we have both been working on

While I did talk to other researchers working with similar mathematical methods, the biological context in which they are working was unfortunately quite different.

Yes but unfortunately it was until the last day of the conference when I met participants with whom I had not previously collaborated but we plan for collaborative research in the future.

Suggestions for Future Conference Sessions

1. Session with talks involving both the experimentalist and the math biologist giving the presentations 2. Session/panel on developing collaborations with experimentalists whether one is at a research 1 institution or not

An analysis of the evolution of molecular regulatory networks

A few examples: 1) Geometric and topological modeling of macromolecules. 2) Electrostatic analysis of proteins and DNS 3) Ion channel modeling and computations 4) Solvation analysis 5) Multiscale models for biomolecules 6) Drug design and protein design

A panel session on different topics.

A similar diversity of topics to the most recent conference.

As a math student, I would like to see a few more talks that focus more on math than biology. While the biology talks are extremely interesting, I was expecting a little more math to be involved.

Bayesian modelling.

Biomechanics multiscale modeling.

Can you please have a short bio of the plenary speakers online? I know they are famous in the areas, but not for everyone. This way, i can read what they are doing and all.

Cancer research, infectious diseases, metabolic diseases (diabetes)

Cell biology, cancer modeling, evolutionary biology

Cellular and sub-cellular processes could be more strongly represented given their prevalence in the field.

Data-driven.

Doing a mini project during conferences.

Ecology, epidemiology, immunology

Endocrine...

Epidemiology

Epidemiology on social contacts networks. Stochastic modelling and simulation for host-pathogen interactions. Stochastic modelling and simulation in epidemiology.

Game theory application to vaccination modeling

Hard to say. Overall, I thought the conference had a good mix of sessions

Hemodynamics, cardiovascular hemorheology.

I almost stopped attending the SMB because of the lack of cell and molecular biology topics. I was glad to see good representation from those fields this year.

I enjoyed the special session on applying to faculty positions.

I really enjoyed the biomath education sections. Please plan on continuing these.

I really liked the sessions. The sessions in particular i really liked were the integrative across disciplines ones, such as the immuno-cancer one. You saw the immunology and the tumor cliques both there. I think there was a modeling infectious disease and disease control one or something related too that was neat.

I think the sessions that existed were great. But maybe mention which sessions would be most accessible to undergrads (some seemed to struggle).

I think the subject areas could be better grouped. The computational biology section (for example) had all sorts of things in it and it was no more computational biology than any of the

other sessions, so the title was a little redundant felling more like, 'stuff that didn't fit into the other sessions'.

I think we had enough variety.

I thought the mix was good, but perhaps there could be a stronger push to get experimentalists.

I thought the sessions on education were a great addition, and i would like to see even more parallel sessions on that topic.

I thought the sessions were great - i liked the variety of everything from tumor modelling to evolutionary dynamics to epidemiology. I can't actually think of a particular one i would like to see that wasn't already included.

I thought there was a good mix already.

I very much liked the minisymposia. These should definitely be kept.

I was quite happy with the balance this time. My highest priorities would be to have immunology and chemical networks continue to be well represented.

I would like to see an energy session included at future conferences.

I would like to see minisymposia where both experimentalists and modelers talk about the same problem.

I would like to see more outreach to our experimental colleagues that use mathematics heavily in their research. I've found that conferences that have a good blend of experimentalists, and mathematicians tend to be the most productive.

I would like to see more talks on angiogenesis. There were many talks about tumors in general, but not enough on angiogenesis. SMB may consider sending representatives to the annual Judah Folkman conference on angiogenesis in Boston in October.

I would love to see more sections that are dedicated to medical problems. In other words, the balance between biology and medicine is heavily biased towards biology.

Ice-breaker events where people are encouraged to interact with those outside their immediate field.

I'd like to see a few more education sessions. I thought they provided many useful ideas.

I'm new to the field, and i noticed that there seemed to be two field of approach to using math in biology: analytical formulas vs. Formalized abstractions (discrete math?). It would be interesting to have a session that discussed these two fields, for which problems they are appropriate, and the assumptions governing each approach to biological problems.

Immunology, virology, epidemiology (pretty well covered already)

Investigation of current immunization models

Loved mix of education and research. I was very satisfied.

Mathematical biology education; agent based modeling.

Mathematical neuroscience got very short shrift; there should be better representation of that in SMB. Right now it is being handled mainly by the SIAM SIAGS on life sciences, and dynamical systems.

Mathematical physiology (more organ, blood, tissue modeling).

Maybe a couple more education sessions: what better way to expand work done in mathematical biology than to implement it early on?

Maybe separate student sessions, similar to the "young water professional" sessions at IWA conferences.

Mentoring session.

Methods sessions - focusing on diverse techniques for modeling biological systems. Novel mathematical tools and approaches in one area can likely be used in others. It would be nice to have a session where such sharing was emphasized. Of course i could also organize such a session myself...

Mixed sessions - mathematicians joint with biologists.

Modeling and cell biology.

Modeling tools.

More biology focused, perhaps from a wildlife standpoint, but that's my biased opinion.

More cancer modeling.

More career panels for junior faculty. More variety in mini symposium topics.

More disease based talks

More diverse talks.

More educational sessions if possible.

More focus on model calibration using available data.

More fun talks that could also work as public lectures.

More interdisciplinary sections. Jacob Scott did a nice job. Pity it was on the last day when most had left! Bigger impact than the traditional sections.

More marine biology.

More modeling stuff on cell polarity and motility.

More neuroscience

More neuroscience, more education

More of what SMB has been doing.

More on epidemiology.

More on models of development.

More on nonlinear modeling.

More on omics related to physiology.

More on physiology, especially at cell level.

More on undergraduate teaching and research.

More sessions on computational aspects of biological modeling.

More spatial ecology.

More stochastic processes.

More systems biology talk. Most of systems biology session talk is not related with the systems biology.

More talks from the biological and/or medical people. I might suggest restricting the number of talks from one lab.

More topics concerning parameter estimation / working with data in dynamic models.

Not really but an extension of time limits for different sessions.

Open problems in biology, in particular at the interface of data and modeling where math bio folks could contribute to problems in modern biology that are not yet well-defined.

Open questions in biology that need mathematical approach for solving.

Perhaps one session aimed at undergraduates.

Perhaps research on mathematical techniques of biological / medical image analysis.

Perhaps conferences, or seminars introducing techniques other researchers are using in a little more detail.

Personally, I'd like more molecular and computational biology, but of course that's just because those are my research interests. :)

Pioneer sessions on brand new areas of research; news and notable for exciting new developments; perspectives from seasoned researchers reviewing the development in a certain subarea.

Plant biology.

Population biology and genetics.

Possibly some sort of interactive session? Always tough though as they are hit or miss...

Same, especially on the integration of modeling and data.

Sections on how methods can be used to solve particular problems in biology.

Session of evolutionary model that connects molecular to ecosystem-level dynamics.

Sessions about geometrical and topological problems in biology. E.g. Shape theory, shape statistics are good candidates to look at in the context of this conference.

Sessions on cell migration.

Sessions on reaction kinetics.

Sessions on systems biology and bioinformatics.

Sessions that explicitly focus on large-scale data analysis and the integration with modeling. I think minisymposia should try to have at least 1 non-modeler in the mix so as to ensure that the sessions really do focus on mathematical modeling that leads to biological insights.

Similar research topics. More education sessions as well.

Similar to here: a nice mix of many math bio topics.

Some presentations tailored to the level of undergraduates.

Some that are more focused on the mathematical theory.

Stability of nonlinear dynamical systems.

Stochastic models in cellular signaling; biophysical models of tissue development; game theory.

Structural biology, bioinformatics, biostat, numerical application.

Systems biology: gene regulation/signal transduction. Analysis: dynamical systems; pde; non-linear analysis.

The current sessions are great. A session on mathematical techniques for biological models would be impressive.

The session topics were sufficiently interesting and diverse.

There seemed to be a lot of overlap in the ecology/conservation/epidemiology sessions, all of which i would have liked to attend. Overlap these with the cancer/biotech talks and you'll have less sad folks missing out on their favorite sessions, i think. I'm always up for more conservation biology and wildlife disease sessions!

Time management session for junior faculty.

Tutorial sessions.

Why we need mathematical approaches to solve cancer problems? Why the contribution by mathematicians in cancer research is still marginal? Is the role of mathematics in cancer research can be as important as it is in physics? How can the description and expression of clinical and biological issues in cancer be mathematicalized as the case in the physics?

Suggestions for Future Conference Plenary Speakers

Table 1. Plenary speakers suggested by more than one respondent

Name	Freq. of suggestion
Martin Nowak	6
Robert Smith	6
Alan Perelson	5
Leah Edelstein	4
Alex Mogilner	4
Simon Levin	4
Philip Maini	3
Troy Day	3
Carlos Castillo-Chavez	3
James Keener	3
Dominik Wodarz	2
Helen Byrne	2
Hans Othmer	2
Mark Chaplain	2
Carl Panetta	2
Odo Diekmann	2
Lou Gross	2
Leah Keshet	2
Herbert Levine	2
Suzanne Lenhart	2
Tim Elston	2
Trachette Jackson	2
Denise Kirschner	2
Uri Alon	2
Bryan Grenfell	2

Responses:

Alan Hastings Lou Gross Simon Levin

Alan Perelson (LANL,USA) Ruy Ribeiro (LANL, USA) Philip Hodgkin (WEHI, Australia) Miles Davenport (UNSW, Australia) Rustom Antia (Emory) Dominik Wodarz (University of California, Irvine)

Alex Mogilner, Artie Sherman, Denise Kirschner, Carson Chow.

Alex Mogilner, Laurent Blanchoin, Andreas Bausch, Iva Tolic, Fred Chang, Tom Pollard, Andrew Goryachev, Christoph Hauert, Dimitrios Vavylonis, Tim Mitchison, Christ, David Drubin, or George Oster. Preferably the eleventh.

Alex Mogilner, Timothy Mitchison, Ewa Paluch, Aaron Fogelson, Leah Keshet, Tim Elston, Greg Forest

Alfio Quarteroni, Anne M. Robertson, Jean-Frédéric GERBEAU

Andrew Mccammon Julie Mitchel

Becca Asquith - I was excited to see her speak, and was disappointed at the cancellation (though I know that the cancellation was neither her nor the organizer's fault).

Bela Novak, Oxford Michael Elowitz, CalTech. Martin Bees, York

Carl Panetta Robert Smith?

Carlos Castillo-Chavez (ASU) and Robert Smith? (U Ottawa)

Carlos Chavez fred Baur Glenn Webb

Castello chavez (Arizona State University), Renee Fister/ Suzanne Lenhart

Cushing

Daniel Lew of Duke University. Daniel is a biologist but his application of mathematical/computational biology is one of the best I have come across (I am currently in his group, but he was a great example of the used of mathematical biology well before I arrived and will continue to be so long after I have left). In Daniel's lab there is a functional relationship between in silico and in vivo experiments, both informing one another to move the field forward.

David Sumpter, Leah Edelstein-Keshet, Des Higham

Dennis Dean, Brigham and Women's Hospital He has done phenomenal work in the area of sleep medicine and gives an excellent talk for a general audience. His work is ground-breaking and highly sophisticated. I can't think of a better person.

Did not attend plenary talks

Dr. Cindy Greenwood, Dr. Linda S. Allen and Dr. David Terman.

franziska michor, herbert levine, bob gatenby, john drake

Hans Othmer (University of Minnesota)

Hans Othmer, Leah Edelstein-Keshet, Alex Mogilner

Helen Byrne, from the University of Oxford

Holly D. Gaff, John Jungck, Robert Smith?

Holly Gaff, Denise Kirschner, Claudia Neuhauser, Carl Panetta, John Adams, Evans Afenya, Mary Ann Horn

Hope to see someone who has the fundamental understanding of cancer biology and provides basic and comprehensive concepts for using mathematical approaches. Hope to see a visionary scientist who truly understands both cancer and mathematics.

I did not enjoy any of the plenary sessions! It's due to my background in infectious disease modelling.

I would enjoy hearing folks talking about open questions in the field (within their particular specialty).

I'd like to volunteer myself (Robert Smith?)

Ilya Shmulevich

James Glazier Leah Keshet Muhammad Zaman

James P. Keener. Michael C. Mackey. John Tyson. Martin Nowak. Sebastian Bonhoeffer.

James Vance

Jim Cushing.

John Harer (Duke Math)

John Tyson

Jordi Bascompte, Stefano Allesina

Joshua Plotkin Simon Levin Iain Couzin

Joshua Weitz had outstanding results and is likely to be a star young researcher in the future.

Keener Cushing Kot

Leah Edelstein-keshet James Keener

Leah Edelstein-Keshet, Helen Byrne, Mark Chaplain, Steve Frank, Alan Perelson, Byron Goldstein

Leonard Sander, Herbert Levine, James Keener

Lou Gross, Suzanne Lenhart

Lynn Zechiedrich, Baylor.

Maia Martcheva

Mark Chaplain

Mark Lewis Bryan Grenfell Mahadevan

Martin Nowak

Martin Nowak John Milton Jim Keener Trachette Jackson

Martin Nowak, Alan Perelson

Matt Keeling Bryan Grenfell Marc Lipsitch Alan Perelson

Michael Reed, Duke Arthur Sherman, NSF Jacques Belair, Montreal

Michael Simpson; Troy Day

Michio Kondoh

Mirjam Kretschmar, Nico Stollenwerk, Bob Kooi

Nick Britton

Odo Diekmann Zhilan Feng Trachette Jackson

Odo Diekmann, Scott O'Neill

Philip Maini, Doron Levy, Rick Durrett

Philip Maini, Martin Nowak

Philip Maini, Sebastian Schreiber.

Robert A. Gatenby

Robert Gatenby, Larry Norton.

Robert j smith?

Robert Smith - University of Ottawa Alan Perelson - Los Alamos National Laboratory Rob DeBoer - Utrecht University Dominik Wodarz - University of California Irvine

Robert Smith? James Keener James Sneyd

S Lenhart, P Armsworth, A. Freidman, M. Lewis

Simon Levin.

Simon Levine, Uri Alon, Alex von Oudennaarden

Stuart West, Martin Nowak.

Talk about computability of evolutionary model by Troy Day.

The Claire Tomlin plenary (was that the speaker's actual name?) was very interesting. Also enjoyed talks by Thomas House and Talitha Washington.

Tim Elston Gaudenz Danuser Doug Lauffenberger John Tyson

Tim Secomb, Feilim MacGabhann, Julia Arciero

Todd Parsons, Joshua B. Plotkin,

Tony Ives, Bob May, Fred Brauer

Troy Day's plenary talk was by far my favourite. I would very much like to hear him speak again.

Uri Alon (yes, I know he was a speaker in Krakow last year), Gregoire Altan-Bonnet, Martin Feinberg, Jeremy Gunawardena, Ramit Mehr, Avidan Neumann, Andreas Radbruch, Eduardo Sontag

Whoever is doing interesting mathematical modeling of neuron firing and/or analysis, maybe someone from the Allen Inst for Brain Science.

Yoh Iwasa should be a plenary speaker in 2014 when the conference is in Japan.

Additional Comments

1. Transportation was supposed to be provided to and from the conference. This was not adequately provided. The shuttle did not arrive 'on the hour, every hour from 7 am to 7 pm', and after a long wait, ended up calling a taxi and rushing to the airport. 2. Several conference participants, including myself, did not receive information finalizing accommodation (which was received by others). 3. No closing remarks or closing coffee break on the last day made it feel as if sessions on Saturday were not important. 4. Overall, the conference was good with excellent sessions, but the general organization was in comparison very poor.

As a participant from Morocco, I wish the annual conference would be held in any country of the Mediterranean at least once every four years to better share ideas and skills and why not in Morocco in 2015 or 2016.

Conference was extremely well-organized.

Good job!

Great conference - LOVED the contra dance and BBQ reception. Great talks and great fun.

Great conference over all! Thanks!

I enjoyed the conference very much. I thank the organizers and UT conferences for everything.

I found the idea of playing music in the session rooms very nice. The food offered was very good too; being the conference in the USA, I expected a puny sandwich for lunch every day. Thanks, this was great!

I found the idea with the music for synchronizing the talks well - it is a pity it was not applied very consistently. I also found the idea of having the first name in large letters at the top of the conference badge in addition to the usual information very helpful.

I had a great time, it was nice to meet other mathematicians with similar aims and work philosophies to my own

I would like to thank the University of Tennessee/NIMBioS management for such an organization and for giving me the opportunity to present at the SMB meeting. Also, I would like to thank my advisor, Suzanne Lenhart, for her financial support and look forward to the next meeting.

I would not attend the meeting on its own, as there are more directly beneficial events to attend with my limited conference and travel funding. It was useful in the context of the NIMBioS conference that immediately preceded it.

In the program booklet, I would like to see conference participants list with their affiliations.

It was a good experience for me. Thanks to the organizers and NIMBioS.

It was very nice that the organizer provided transportation from the airport, and a big thank you should be extended to drivers who were waiting for the delayed flights.

Maybe a pdf file for contact address and emails for conference participants

Overall I liked the conference and would rate it 7 out of 10. Still there is space for improvements.

Overall the organization of the conference was excellent. However, there were a few issues: For international attendees, earlier availability of information about the schedule and transportation would have been helpful in planning travel. The transportation information was received at midday on the day of arrival. The shuttles that were supposed to take attendees to the airport did not turn up on the Sunday and people needed to arrange taxis at the last minute.

Overall, it was an excellent meeting.

Some keynote speaker talked too much about policy like things without even mentioning the mathematical side of the research. That was quite disappointing.

Tell the Convention Center to reduce the A/C - 74F would still have been 16 degrees lower than outside.

Thank you for a great conference experience. The size of the meeting was just right for meeting new people. The food and hospitality was first rate. I must say that the contra dancing was quite fun, and I would have enjoyed having that earlier in the conference to get to know people sooner. Many thanks to the organizers for such a productive and enjoyable meeting!

Thank you...

Thanks to the organizers, especially having to change plans with the plenary speakers in mid-stream! The conference building was excellent.

Thanks!

The contra dance was absolutely fantastic.

The location was really cool and I enjoyed the conference. The size is about right. The coffee could have been stronger. If you are going to serve barbeque and have a dance, why not give people beer? Some of the undergraduate posters were really good. The society should give more small awards, as these help careers and are a good way to direct resources to the field. I jumped out from behind a poster and scared someone.

The only somewhat serious complaint I have is about my accommodation booking - I originally booked for 5 nights, but a few days later wrote an e-mail to ask about changing it to 4 nights. I never got a reply and, having stayed 4 nights, have no idea if I ever receive some sort of a refund for the fifth night or not. (The web site was unclear as to that specific situation and the people at the Vol Hall front desk were not very useful about it.)

The organizing committee should give clear instruction on the checkout process.

The rooms were way too cold...

The social event (barbecue/contra dancing) was very good and excellent way for breaking the ice and being more than just a boring conference banquet. However, contra music between speakers was a TERRIBLE idea. Speakers and audience had to shout over the music in order to ask questions (disrupted question period after each talk).

The vegetarian lunches could be improved. On one of the days it seemed like the dish was made up of sides that were already available at the buffet. In general it seemed like the vegetarian meals were just side dishes.

The venue could have been a bit more glamorous. Knoxville, although a friendly city, is relatively bare.

Well done!

Appendix

The Society for Mathematical Biology Annual Meeting and Conference Evaluation

Thank you for taking a moment to complete this survey. Your responses will be used to improve conferences hosted by SMB. Information supplied on the survey will be confidential, and results will be reported only in the aggregate.

1.) Please check the appropriate box to indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about this Conference:

(Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly disagree)

- I was satisfied with the registration process.
- I was satisfied with the conference materials provided.
- The Conference was well-organized.
- The Conference met my expectations.
- The presenters were very knowledgeable about their topics.
- I was satisfied with the variety of topics presented.
- I would recommend participating in this Conference to my colleagues.

2.) How do you feel about the format of the Conference?

This was a very effective format

This was not a very effective format → The Conference format would have been more effective if:

3.) Please check the appropriate box to indicate your level of satisfaction with:

(Very satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied, Not applicable)

- Food provided
- Facilities where the Conference was held

4.) Do you feel that participating in the Conference helped you better understand the research going on in disciplines other than your own?

Yes

No

Comments:

5.) Did you develop plans for collaborative research with other Conference participants with whom you had not previously collaborated?

Yes

No

Possibly

Comments:

6.) Do you feel that the exchange of ideas that took place during the Conference will influence your future research?

Yes

No

Possibly

Comments:

7.) What do you feel was the most useful aspect of the Conference?

8.) What would you change about the Conference?

9.) What kinds of sessions would you like to see included at future conferences?

10.) Which plenary speakers would you enjoy hearing at future conference (feel free to suggest several names)?

11.) Please use this space for any additional comments: